

# People I Remember

I remember David Murray who lived in the same road as me, Shanklin Road at Belmont in Surrey, when we were kids. David and I went to the same primary school in Cotswold Road. David's dad was a coalman from Northampton. Coalmen, in those days, were tradesmen who delivered sacks of coal to people's houses. The coal would be put into the coal bunker or coal shed and was burned in the living room fireplace as the main source of winter warmth for most people.

David told me that his dad had said that Chatsworth Road School in Cheam was better than the school in Sutton. David was my best friend so when he decided to go to Chatsworth Road I got my dad to send me there too.

David and I were friends until one day we had a fight in the school playground. I don't remember what the fight was about but I managed to get on top, holding David down and telling him to "Submit! Submit!" David agreed and I let him get up but, once he was on his feet again, he pretended that me saying "Submit! Submit!" was me submitting. I said that that didn't make sense because I was on top and I had obviously won the fight. He denied that any such thing had ever occurred. We were never friends again and soon after that the Murray family moved back to Northampton.

I remember the boys from the Keenan family. One of them was a monitor at school, a position of trust. One day he showed me some flies which he had captured and impaled on pins on a window ledge. I thought that was horrible.

I remember Trevor Pegg and Paul Adams who became my best friends in secondary school because we all disliked sport. Paul Adams and his younger brother Les liked the Bonzo Dog Band. I went round to their house sometimes and we pretended to be radio DJs playing records to each other and introducing them in "groovy" tones of voice.

I used to go for lunch at Trevor Pegg's house. I brought sandwiches and Trevor's parents left soup and desert things in the cupboard for us. Eventually Mr. and Mrs. Pegg told Trevor not to bring me to their house because I was "a bad influence" on Trevor. I think it was because I loved making up silly jokes about everything. Trevor and I had a mythology about the "murky water barrel" in his family's garden. Trevor's parents left notes telling us to leave the place tidy and I made up a joke that the word "tidy" should be pronounced "tiddy" and that "Tiddy" was the name of an invisible cat who lived there.

It was this kind of silly wordplay and overactive imagination which used to get me into trouble with other kids' parents. Also my parents were "foreigners" - one Canadian and one Irish - which meant that I wasn't really as British as they were.

I remember Paul and Robert Norouznesseri who lived just around the corner from us at number 5 Shanklin Road. They were Christians of Iranian descent. Paul and I were the same age and we were put together in a school play where we had to wear cardboard beaks and pretend to be "Two little dicky birds Peter and Paul, fly away Peter, Fly away Paul" and

we were really excited to be in the play. We were only about six or seven years old. We were tremendously disappointed to be dropped from the play at the last minute when we were brutally told by a teacher "Forget your part - It's been cut!"

Years later, when I was twenty something and in the Emin, I remember Angela Bruce (AKA "Sunny") saying those exact same words to someone, a woman I was having a conversation with in an Emin meeting, "Forget your part - It's been cut!"

She said it in exactly the same tone of voice and vocal rhythm as that teacher had said it to me and Paul all those years before. Just as if she were channelling the previous shock and disappointment from my memories. Weird.

I remember David Brake who was one of my team mates in the Children's World Drama Team in Glastonbury in 1984 and 1985. David Brake who was always mild mannered and jokey and friendly to everyone, grown up or child, and used to amuse us with his antics in the van on the way to each of the schools where we did our drama sessions. I remember his running gag of opening the window and saying "Shall I do a stunt? Shall I do a stunt? I could climb out on the roof and do a stunt? What does everybody think?"

I remember Arabella Churchill, the granddaughter of Winston Churchill, who was the boss of the Children's World charity and gave so many people the opportunity to use our talents, acting, singing, making puppets and toys and costumes. We were bringing fun and games to children all over Somerset and the area which, in the 1980s, was called Avon. Parachute games, clowning, face painting, music, drama, the play bus. So many great and wonderful things which existed because Arabella worked to make it all happen.

I remember a man who called himself "Salmon" who was a friend of mine when I was in the Emin. I remember Salmon telling me that it was possible to control toothache by the power of the mind and make the pain just go away. I said "Oh, I don't think I have the ability to control pain like that" and he said "Oh, I think you do" and after that, miraculously, I could! Salmon was a computer programmer who had his own business writing software for the types of computer which existed in the late 1970s. He was trying to figure out how to make an animated starfield happen on a TV monitor using the sort of programming language they used to use in those days. He had an interesting collection of old Victorian books and told me a Victorian joke about "If the B m t put:" but "If the B. putting:" It's a puzzle sort of joke and the key to it is that a capital "B" can be called a "Great B".

I remember some unknown man whom I passed on the stairs in the Emin building at Putney who said "You are SO UGLY!" as he walked past me. I don't know who he was or why he said that. Strange.

I remember Gene, who ran the Emin coffee bar somewhere around about 1978-ish. I used to work there behind the counter as an unpaid volunteer until one day when I went in as a customer and he refused to sell me a cup of tea. He kept saying "No, no, your money's no good here!" So I had to go all the way up the road to a take-away place and buy a cup of tea there and carry it all the way back to the Emin centre. I never worked for Gene's coffee bar again after that.

Years later I discovered that "Your money's no good here" is a jokey American thing to say but I didn't know that at the time and I was seriously upset about not being able to get a cup of tea there after working for him unpaid on so many occasions. He should have explained if he was going to do jokey American things. I had no way of knowing what they think is funny in America. Bear in mind that these events were taking place in a building where everyone was under varying degrees of hypnotic mind control so I wasn't very quick witted.

I remember Tony, a suedehead from Birmingham, who worked at the Carmen heated hair roller warehouse in 1972 and was always telling me about his schemes to rob the place. He also kept trying to start a fight with me but then invited me to his wedding reception. Odd.

I remember meeting, over a period of several years, various entirely separate short haired people called John who always claimed to be heroin addicts.

I remember various rock freaks at festivals who are always looking for temporarily lost members of their party and those lost members are always called Madhead and Fruitbat.

I remember Sean who worked in the civil service in Taunton and committed suicide by hanging himself in his kitchen after his girlfriend left him. He was working in the department that chased up estranged husbands about paying child support money to their estranged wives. Doing that job and finding himself alone and broke was, I suppose, too much to bear.

I remember Tobyn who lived in the same house as me on Windmill Hill, Glastonbury and got evicted by the professional medium/clairvoyant who rented the house to us. He had neglected to pay his rent for a long time. Then, several weeks after he was evicted, he tried to climb into the house through my bedroom window. The house was a bungalow and I was laying on my bed reading a book when Tobyn began surreptitiously climbing in the window. When he was all the way through the window I said "Hello Tobyn. Why are you climbing in my window?"

"Oh. Hi Pete!" replied Tobyn, "Sorry about this but I seem to have lost my key".

I said "Tobyn, you don't live here anymore. You were evicted for not paying rent".

Tobyn said "OH. Yes I suppose so... ermmm But I think that was probably all just a bit of a misunderstanding or something".

I gave him a cup of tea and helped him to figure out where he actually lived, which was his parents house in Taunton. He was a mad poet, a Somerset cricket fan and an old Children's World employee. He spoke like Bertie Wooster. He used to get his post forwarded to him from the Y.W.C.A. Taunton.

Not the Y.M.C.A. you notice.

The Y.W.C.A. where he claimed he used to live. He was never able to provide any reasonable explanation for this but people said he wasn't as daft as he pretended to be.

I remember lots of interesting, strange, clever or mad people I've met or known over the years.